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NEWS RELEASE

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Statewide SAT Scores Hold Steady RIDE Announces Plan to Encourage More Students to Take the College Boards

The SAT scores for public-school students in Rhode Island remained essentially unchanged this year, as the mean verbal score rose one point (to 493) and the mathematics score declined one point (to 496), exactly matching the changes in the nation as a whole, according to results released today by The College Board.

Overall, the scores of Rhode Island public-school students have declined by one point over the past five years but increased by 17 points over the past 10 years.

The state's public-school participation rate of 62 percent is 12th-highest in the nation.

The mean scores for all students in Rhode Island (including private and parochial schools) was 503 on the verbal test (up one point) and 502 on the mathematics test (down 2 points).

In conjunction with the release of the test results, the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) is announcing an ambitious program to encourage all high-school students to take the SAT tests.

Education Commissioner Peter McWalters has notified all school districts that if they administer the PSAT exam to *all* juniors, RIDE will pick up the full cost. The PSAT is a College Board test that is a preliminary and preparatory test for the SATs.

"There are three reasons for this," McWalters said. "First, this will help students who might never have thought about college to see that college may well be within their grasp. Second, The College Board will provide our teachers with excellent professional development as a result of our participation in this program. Third, students who take the PSAT perform significantly better on the SAT exam, which will help their chances for college admission and for scholarships."

According to data from The College Board, students who took the PSAT exam perform on average about 50 points better than other students on each SAT exam.

To date, 24 school districts (out of 32 that have high schools) have agreed to administer the PSATs to all juniors. The cost will be about \$70,000, which will be paid with federal funds provided to RIDE for student assessments.

"I'm delighted that so many of our high schools will be participating in this new program," said Jack R. Warner, the R.I. Commissioner of Higher Education. "This will encourage many more students to begin preparation for college at an earlier stage in their education, and it will help many more with their performance on this set of exams. I look forward to a time when all Rhode Island high schools will participate in this important project."

The list of SAT scores by high school and the list of districts participating in the PSAT program are posted on the RIDE Web site, www.ride.ri.gov